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Two Colonels

John Taylor.

Hunterdon Historical Series, No. 2.

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THE TWO

COLONELS JOHN TAYLOR.

AN HISTORICAL SKETCH.

By Henry Race, M. D.

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In the War of the Revolution there were two John Taylors with the rank of Colonel belonging to the Militia of the Colony of New Jersey, one in the Second Middlesex Regiment and the other in the Fourth Hunterdon.

Col. John Taylor, of Middlesex,

Was born August 1, 1751. He was the only son of Jacob Taylor, of Amboy, N. J., (born Nov. 22, 1729, died in Dec., 1776,) and Rachel, daughter of John Potter, of Springfield, N. J. His grandfather was John Taylor, of Hawes, Bedfordshire, England, (born 1688,) who immigrated to this country in 1739 and settled on the Raritan.

At the age of 19, (1770,) Col. John Taylor

graduated from Princeton College, N. J., and shortly after moved to New Brunswick on the invitation of the Trustees of Queen's (now Rutgers) College, and was elected to a professorship in that institution, which position he filled till 1795. He married, in 1781, Jeannette Fitz-Randolph, of Woodbridge, N. J. They had three children, Augustus R., M. D., of New Brunswick, born May 27, 1782; John and Mary.

At the beginning of the Revolution he was chosen a Captain in Col. Neilson's battalion of "Minute Men," enlisted for service wherever required, and held ready to march at a moment's notice. August 16, 1776, he was appointed First Major; and June 6, 1777, Lieut. Colonel in Col. Neilson's 2nd Regiment of Middlesex Militia. In 1779 he was 1st Colonel of the New Jersey State Regiment.

During the war his time appears to have been divided between his duties as a patriot and Colonel of a militia regiment and those

pertaining to his professorship. In a letter to Governor Livingston, dated "North Branch of Raritan, Sept. 25, 1779," he wrote:

"Sir: It was my intention to have inclosed a return of the number of officers who have joined the State Regiment from each county; and also the deficiencies of each, but not having been able to get the reports of the several companies soon enough, owing to their separate stations, and the necessity of attending the examination of the students of Queen's College, I have, at present, omitted making such a return, but shall transmit it, together with the state of the regiment, as soon as possible. * * * * * * * * * * His Excellency will also recollect that I informed him that I was previously engaged by the trustees of Queen's College, and that it was with great difficulty that I was able to leave the business of the College until the vacation. * * * * * The trustees of Queen's College insisting upon my fulfilling my engagements, I hope

I shall be discharged from the regiment as soon as possible. * * * * *

"I remain, with great respect, your very humble servant,

"JOHN TAYLOR,

"1st Col. New Jersey State Regiment.

"His Excellency Gov'r Livingston."

He and his students were, more than once, obliged to decamp from New Brunswick owing to the proximity of the British forces. The *New Jersey Gazette* of May 5, 1778, announces that "The business of Queen's College in New Jersey, formerly carried on in New Brunswick, is begun at North Branch of Raritan, in the county of Somerset, in a pleasant and retired neighborhood; lodging and board to be had in decent families at £30 per annum. Apply to John Taylor, A. M., tutor at place aforesaid." Another notice in same paper of January 24, 1779, gives information that the "College is still carried on at the North Branch of Raritan, and that the neighborhood is so far distant from head-

quarters that the army does not at least interfere with the business of the College." In 1780 John Taylor, as Clerk of the Faculty, announces that the vacation of Queen's College at Hillsboro (Millstone) is expired and the business again commenced.

The affairs of the College in the Revolution were carried on in an old church built of logs, with a frame addition, which stood near the junction of the North and South Branches of the Raritan river, in Branchburg township, Somerset county, on land now belonging to Mr. John Vosseller, and nearly opposite his residence. It was built in 1718 and completed the following year. It was known as the North Branch Church. The Rev. Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen preached the first sermon in it, February 21, 1720. It was yet standing at the time of the Revolution, in a partially dilapidated condition, but sufficiently uninjured to be used for a short time in the exigency then impending. The number of students during the war was not

large, and the curriculum, presumably, was somewhat curtailed.

In 1791 Col. John Taylor removed to Elizabethtown and engaged in teaching the Greek and Latin languages together with Natural Philosophy. In 1794 he was called to teach in the Academy at Schenectady, N. Y., which afterwards developed to Union College. He remained there as Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy until his death, which occurred November 8, 1801.

Col. John Taylor, of Hunterdon,

Was born at Bath, England. Of the date of his birth or immigration to this country we have no means of ascertaining. He married Lydia Kar, and settled on a tract of 400 acres of land situated on the Rockaway creek, between New Germantown and White House. There was a mill on the

property, known from about 1760 to '80 as Taylor's Mill; afterwards as Saxon's; and owned now by Mr. John Lane.

They had three children: Nathaniel Kar Taylor, Catharine Kar Taylor, and Lydia Kar Taylor.

Nathaniel Kar Taylor was born in Readington, June 21, 1769. He went from home as a clerk in a store at White House; and from there to Amboy as clerk for Marsh & Parker, shippers in the West India trade. He was married, March 26, 1802, to Mary, daughter of William Cool and Sarah his wife. They were married at Readington by Rev. Peter O. Studiford. He died at Woodbridge, Middlesex county, August 28, 1823, and was interred at Metuchen. His wife, Mary Cool, was born in Readington, May 14, 1777. She died in New York, April 12, 1823.

Catharine, daughter of Col. John and Lydia Kar Taylor, married, 1784, Rev. William Boyd, who was pastor of the Lamington

Presbyterian Church, Somerset county, from October 20, 1784, to the time of his death, May 17, 1807. They had several children.

Nathaniel K. and Mary (Cool) Taylor had six children: William Cool Taylor, born January 16, 1803; died in Rio Janeiro, March 8, 1842; Lydia Kar Taylor, born January 22, 1805; married Aaron Bloodgood, December 12, 1822; died at Perth Amboy, October 8, 1837; Sarah Ann Taylor, born November 3, 1807; married to Wm. Savidge; died in New York, May 13, 1860; John Taylor, born December 16, 1809; died in New York, January 23, 1848; Catharine Taylor, born April 11, 1812; married William LaForge, of Woodbridge, 1832; died at Perth Amboy, December 1, 1868; Nathaniel Taylor, born November 4, 1814; went on a voyage at sea and never returned.

Under the several acts of the Colonial Legislature and the Continental Congress in 1775 and '76 four Regiments of Militia were organized in Hunterdon county. The Fourth

Regiment was under command of Col. John Mehelm. John Taylor was chosen Captain of one of its companies; October 28, 1775, he was promoted to the rank of Second Major; November 27, 1776, he was made a Major in Col. Read's battalion, State troops; February 17, 1777, Lieut. Colonel in Fourth Hunterdon Regiment; and May 23, 1777, Colonel of the last named Regiment. (*See Adj. Gen. Stryker's Officers and Men of New Jersey in the Revolution, pp. 343 and 356.*)

Of his personal military services we have no particular data. The patriots of the Revolution were, for the most part, too actively engaged in making history to find time to write it. It is well known that the New Jersey militia took a very creditable part in the engagements at Quinton's Bridge, Hancock's Bridge, Three Rivers and Connecticut Farms; and rendered important service in the sanguinary battles of Trenton, Princeton, Germantown, Springfield and Monmouth.

William P. Sutphin, of Bedminster, Som-

erset county, who is well informed as to the early history of his section, states that Col. Taylor was promoted to the rank of General in the militia after the war.

The latter years of this old patriot's life were clouded by financial embarrassment. With too much generosity he became one of the bondsmen for County Collector, Joshua Corshon, who was a defaulter to the amount of £3,121, s11, d6. This, with the depreciation of the Continental currency and shrinkage in values, absorbed his estate. He was prosecuted in the Supreme Court in an action for debt, confessed judgment, execution was issued and Sheriff Jacob Anderson "Levied on Eight Horses twelve Cattle Twenty Sheep one old Negro Man two wenches & three Negro Children Viz two Boys & one Girl one Eight Day Clock one Desk two Tables Six Chairs two Beds and Bedding four Hundred Acres of Land where Sd. Taylor lives part in Tewksberry & part in Reading-town." (*Sheriff Anderson's Docket, p. 39.*)

"C. C. C. & Confined the Genl. in Flemington Goal on the 29th September 1795 & 31st October the Genl. went out of Goal." (*Sheriff Anderson's Docket, p. 94.*)

In civilized countries heroes and patriots have often been distinguished and honored and their memory embalmed in classic eulogy. Such was not the award of this veteran officer. After suffering a faithful soldier's hardships, privations and risk of life in his country's struggle for independence, he was incarcerated in the county prison thirty-one days for the misfortune of pecuniary insolvency.

The date of his death and place of interment we have failed to ascertain.

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